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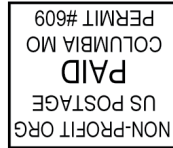


★ SUMMER 2023 ★

## QUARTERLY CONNECTION



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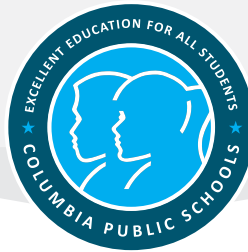
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**Vice President** Jeanne Snodgrass  
**Member** April Ferrao  
Paul Harper  
John Lyman  
Blake Willoughby  
**Superintendent** Dr. Brian Yearwood



# Rock Bridge High School marks 50th anniversary

2023 marks the 50th anniversary of Rock Bridge High School. Principal Jacob Sirna says this milestone is a chance to reflect on where they started and how they've grown.

The school opened in 1973 and has seen tremendous growth over the years, driven mainly by the population growth of Columbia. "We began with 600 students and today we serve 2,000," said Sirna, "making it one of the largest high schools in Missouri."

Expansion has been significant over the years. Bond issues passed in 1974-76 financed the addition of 20 classrooms in the west wing. In 1992, the performing arts center opened, an additional 39 classrooms were added, along with a large media center, gym, additional performing arts spaces and improved athletic facilities.

This year's ongoing celebration has included fun facts shared each morning during announcements along with weekly social media posts featuring photos of days past and former students. The students have especially enjoyed these look backs.

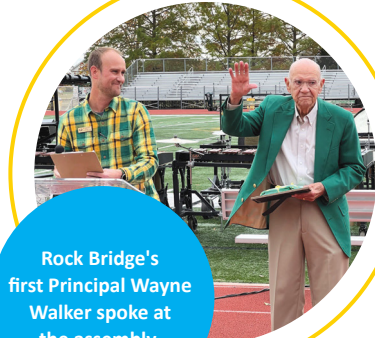
Celebrations kicked off at the homecoming assembly, which welcomed back Rock Bridge's first principal, Wayne Walker. Sirna says Walker's leadership is still fundamental today, and pointed to the cultural mission he developed, "Freedom With Responsibility."

More celebrations are scheduled, including a specialty medallion presented to all graduates at the 50th commencement ceremony.

Sirna said he is proud the school has come into its own academically, athletically, and with its arts programs, and says it ranks among the top high schools in Missouri.

Learn more about the history of Rock Bridge High School on the CPS website at [www.CPSK12.org/rbhs](http://www.CPSK12.org/rbhs).

Students had fun competing at the homecoming assembly



Rock Bridge's first Principal Wayne Walker spoke at the assembly.

## NEW BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS

**April Ferrao, Paul Harper, and John Lyman** have been elected to fill three seats on the Columbia Board of Education. All three are new to the board and will serve three-year terms. The Board members were officially sworn in at the Board's April meeting.



April Ferrao



Paul Harper



John Lyman



# Construction updates



Boone County Nature School



Boone County Nature School



Jefferson Middle School

The **Columbia Area Career Center** will be undergoing a remodel and expansion of the current building. The design phase has been completed and demolition and removal of the eastern and southeastern parts of the building will follow. The new section will add nearly 20,000 square feet and is slated for completion in December 2024.

A **new elementary school** is slated to be built next to John Warner Middle School. Three design prototypes were presented to the design committee in May and once a prototype is chosen the project will be fast-tracked into the final design phase. Estimated completion is July 2025.

Work on the addition to **Battle Elementary School** will start in early 2024 with completion planned for August 2025. This project will provide additional classrooms to bring student capacity up to approximately 650 students and will also provide a storm shelter. Due to anticipated population growth, the building was originally constructed with a modular concept and already has a pad ready for this addition.

Continuing **ADA and security upgrades**, including secured vestibule entries, are still underway with six locations slated for completion before the 2023-24 school year starts. The final four locations will be completed in summer of 2024.

The **Boone County Nature School** project is moving right along, with an estimated completion of June 2024. The slab for the buildings has been poured and road infrastructure is underway. The outdoor space is being used while the classroom and council house are under construction.

The **Jefferson Middle School** gymnasium addition, elevator installation, and security upgrades have been completed. This was a large project that included upgrades to the athletic field and major accessibility improvements.



## COLUMBIA AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ASSOCIATION

Representatives from NASA visited **Hickman High School** in February to speak with **Columbia Aeronautics and Space Association (CASA)** students and judge their projects as part of a national design challenge. Projects were focused on how to do things in space, like rolling dice with no gravity, recycling waste into material for bricks, and constructing an LED work desk.

Mike Merz, Columbia Area Career Center CASA program instructor, said "My students did an amazing job. It's just a wonderful opportunity for them to get to interface with NASA directly and to share their work."

The national design challenge is through the High School Students United with NASA to Create Hardware (HUNCH) and teaches high school students the basics of NASA design, motivating them to learn more about astronomy. Finalists **Gabe Palmer**, **Max Strode** and **Augustus**

**Lookingbill** traveled to Houston, Texas, to present their rolling dice project at the Johnson Space Center.



## News you can use

### LANGE MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER RECEIVES EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD

Lange Middle School Health and Physical Education teacher **Ciara Tatum** recently received the Educator of the Year award during the second Columbia's Black Excellence Awards Gala.

"We are very proud of Ciara and our Health and PE family congratulates her," Health and PE district coordinator Kim Goforth said.

## PERFECT ACT SCORES

**Yogev Angelovici**, Rock Bridge High School  
**Shubha Gautam**, Rock Bridge High School  
**George Jia**, Rock Bridge High School  
**Noah Zheng**, Hickman High School

## 2023 NATIONAL MERIT FINALISTS

**Yogev Angelovici**, Rock Bridge High School  
**Julie Baguio**, Rock Bridge High School  
**George Jia**, Rock Bridge High School  
**Kevin Mao**, Rock Bridge High School  
**Sriya Pokala**, Rock Bridge High School  
**Nora Pushechnikova**, Rock Bridge High School  
**Robell Tewolde**, Rock Bridge High School  
**Yoell Tewolde**, Rock Bridge High School  
**Daniel Webb**, Rock Bridge High School

## MISSOURI SCHOLARS 100

**Nora Humfeld**, Hickman High School  
**Judah Bernal**, Hickman High School  
**Yogev Angelovici**, Rock Bridge High School  
**George Jia**, Rock Bridge High School  
**Gabrielle Clifton**, Battle High School (*honorable mention*)  
**Wen-Hsin Chen**, Battle High School (*honorable mention*)

# Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence outstanding educator honorees

Seven Columbia Public Schools' educators have been selected as this year's Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence honorees.

Since its inception in the 1979-80 school year, the Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence has served to recognize more than 250 educators in Columbia Public Schools for their outstanding teaching, leadership, and support for students. Each year, educators are selected from nominations submitted by parents and peers as outstanding educators.

Honorees are celebrated at an award banquet and receive a \$1,500 cash award and an engraved silver tray.

The fund began through the work of the late Ray and Jeanne Lewis, with an initial contribution and extensive fundraising efforts. The late Mr. Lewis was a local attorney and former Board of Education member. The late Mrs. Lewis was a former teacher. Thanks to the contributions and support from individuals, businesses and organizations, Columbia's best educators continue to be recognized each year for their contributions to CPS students.



**Casey Cottrill**  
**Eliot Battle Elementary School**  
*Outstanding Elementary Educator*  
*Grades PreK-2*



**Beth Diggs**  
**New Haven Elementary School**  
*Outstanding Elementary Educator*  
*Grades 3-5*



**Meera Sood**  
**Smithton Middle School**  
*Outstanding Middle School Educator*



**Cassandra Schmittell**  
**Hickman High School**  
*Outstanding High School Educator*



**Shae Collier**  
**Special Services (504 programs)**  
*Outstanding Administrator*



**Sequoia Stewart**  
**Shepard Boulevard Elementary School**  
*Outstanding Beginning Teacher*



**Lisa Rieken**  
**Quest Program at Bethel Street Center**  
*Outstanding Educator in a Specialized Area*



# Lange Middle School celebrates 25th anniversary

Students and staff at Lange Middle School have a lot to celebrate this year, as the school marks its 25th anniversary.

Lange Middle School, named after John B. Lange, Sr., who helped to build the first permanent black school in Columbia, opened its doors in 1997.

With a diverse student population, the school serves students from Alpha Hart Lewis, Derby Ridge, Blue Ridge, Eliot Battle, and Two Mile Prairie elementary schools. Principal Dominique Falls says this diversity makes Lange a melting pot middle school. "Anyone can come here and be part of the family," Falls said.

With more than eight years as part of the Lange family himself, Falls is proud to serve as the school's principal and headed up a "reunion" celebration to commemorate the 25th anniversary.

On April 29th, students, staff and administrators - current and past - gathered to show their Lange Leopard pride. The celebration featured bounce houses, an obstacle course, food, games, DJ music, and a presentation about John B. Lange and his contributions to the community.

There is much to be proud of at Lange. Developments over the years include the addition of a kitchen, expansion of the track and field facilities, and the addition of a robust middle school athletic program.

"We wanted an athletic program to serve as a welcoming 'front porch' to the school. We've had some very good teams over the years, and it's provided our students with all the positive benefits that athletics and teamwork can lend," Falls said.

Falls said there have been many ways for students and staff to get involved, including a special anniversary section in the yearbook, to share thoughts about their time at Lange.



Lange Athletics and Activities Director Jeffrey Lindhardt pictured with the school's first Athletics and Activities Director Robert Ndessokia



# Outgoing Board of Education members

After serving Columbia Public Schools for 12 years as a board member, including three years as President of the board, **Helen Wade** decided not to seek re-election.

"As I sit here this evening looking back on 12 years of service to this community, there are three words that come to mind. Those are, 'It's my honor.' I am so proud to have served all of you," Wade said.

"We make decisions for your children. We make decisions that affect you and we do so with allegiance to what we truly believe to be best," she said. "This has been such an unbelievable part of my life for a long time - some of you know I started when my daughter was beginning kindergarten, and I'm finishing as she graduates high school. To have played a part in her education is priceless."

**David Seamon** also chose not to seek re-election after serving as board president.

"I ran because I want to close the school-to-prison pipeline. But one of the reasons I really ran was because I looked out to the world and I saw this negative image of black men. We have not done a great job of presenting ourselves to the world, but I wanted to give kids in this community something different to see, something that they can look at and think 'I could be that guy - I could do that too,'" Seamon said. "I've done a lot of things in my life and I've served with some great people, billions of Marines, all kinds of folks - but this has been one of the greatest honors of my life."

After three years on the Board, **Chris Horn** closed out his term and had the following advice for new members.

"The essence of this work is humility, sacrifice, and service," Horn said. "Strive for the essence of this work. The functions take care of themselves in the pitfalls to be avoided. Keep the changes coming, we need them."

# Ridgeway Elementary School students commemorate 100th anniversary

The 4th- and 5th-grade students at Ridgeway Elementary School engaged in several multi-faceted projects this spring to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the school.

Research began in early February and projects were completed in March. Students were allowed to choose their medium based on their areas of interest. They created presentations using the coding app Scratch, designed a digital scrapbook, conducted Jeopardy-style games with facts and history about the school, district and community, hosted podcasts and created artwork such as dioramas. Because students got to choose their medium for the project, they were very excited and engaged in the work.

The effort was headed up by Ridgeway Media Specialist Rebecca Munsterman along with teachers Maria Cox, Laura Sandstedt, and Alex Gray, and student-teacher Drew Damery.

Munsterman said Ridgeway will have a large celebration in the fall of 2023 organized by the school's PTA. In an effort to get students involved, Munsterman and the other teachers came up with the idea of having students help with the research. Because the school already engages in a lot of individual guided projects, it made perfect sense. All project concepts provided opportunities for students to practice research skills, speaking and listening, technology skills, informational writing, and more.

The fall celebration will be enhanced by showcasing the completed student projects. A mini unveiling of some of the student projects will occur at Ridgeway's IGE (Individual Guided Education) in Action Night in May.

Another aspect of the effort included a field trip to the State Historical Society, where staff shared their own research results about the history of

the school as well as specifics about their research methods, to help students in their quest.

Students enjoyed multiple guest speakers who visited the school to share their memories as well as research methodology. Past principals, alumni, and local community members visited and spoke about their experiences at Ridgeway and in the Columbia community throughout the years.

Munsterman said one unexpected benefit of the project was that students weren't able to find all their information online. Instead, they had to revert to some pre-internet methods, including combing through boxes of primary sources like old newspapers, scrapbooks, and other sources curated over the years. "They had to learn to analyze the research, sifting through unmarked photos and figuring out what it is, who is pictured, and why it is important," Munsterman said.

Some of the projects were expanded beyond the history of the school to look at what was happening in the world 100 years ago. This included fields such as pop culture and provided context for the position of Ridgeway in relation to the rest of the community.

Munsterman said it was fun to see the interview questions students came up with, conveying the sort of things that were of interest to them. Questions like, "what did school lunch look like?" and "what did you do for recess?" piqued their interest. The interviewing provided many learning opportunities, such as how to ask follow-up questions and engage others in conversation. She said the students took their projects very seriously.

It was a fun and challenging project for the staff as well. "It's not a topic we're experts on, so we were researching and learning along with the kids – a great example for them that adults don't always know the answers either, but together we can find the resources," Munsterman said.

**" It's not a topic we're experts on, so we were researching and learning along with the kids ... "**

